

Book review

Anaerobic infections: clinical and laboratory practice. By A Trevor Willis and Kenneth D Phillips. (Pp 169: £20 including postage, cash with order). London: PHLS, 1988.

This book replaces the PHLS monograph on the subject and has been produced to take account of the enormous advances in the clinical and laboratory aspects of anaerobic microbiology in the past decade. There are chapters on the clinical aspects of anaerobic infection and on anaerobes as normal flora, but much of the book consists, as the authors explain, of a "bench manual for all those concerned with the routine isolation and identification of anaerobes in clinical specimens". As such, it succeeds very well and will form an essential part of any laboratory bookshelf, as well as being a convenient reference book for laboratory medical and technical staff in training. It does not try to be a purely clinical textbook and deals only briefly with clinical aspects of anaerobic infections. Clostridial infections take up a disproportionate amount of space, reflecting the authors' interest and unique expertise in this topic.

As might be expected in such a book, genital infections receive only brief mention (four to five pages within a chapter on "Infections with obligate anaerobes"), but there are detailed sections on anaerobic vaginosis and anaerobic balanoposthitis. The authors deal in some detail with the clinical features and laboratory diagnosis of these conditions and make the interesting point that if these conditions can be spread by person-to-person contact (by genital or orogenital contact) the tissues of a healthy person could be infected by the normal anaerobic bacterial flora of their partner.

This is an authoritative, compact, well written text, but one which readers of this journal might wish to borrow from their laboratory colleagues, rather than purchase for themselves.

B Watt

Obituary

Dr André Siboulet

Dr André Siboulet, Director of the World Health Organisation's Collaborating Centre



for Research on Sexually Transmitted Diseases at the Institut Alfred Fournier, Paris, and President of the International Union against the Venereal Diseases and the Treponematoses (IUVDT), died on 27 June 1988 aged 70 in the Salpêtrière Hospital.

André Siboulet was born in Châteauroux (Indre) in Berry on 8 September 1917, the second of two children, his sister being 20 years older than him. During the period of the Spanish Civil War he volunteered as a stretcher bearer, and his experiences there instilled in him an intense dislike of oppression, which was put into practice when he played a brave part in the French Resistance.

André Siboulet graduated in 1945, was an intern at the Saint-Lazare Hospital in Paris, and later spent some time as a medical officer in Indo-China on national service. Back in Paris his interest in venereology grew, much influenced by Pierre Durel. Indeed his first publication in 1950 was in a paper of his former chief on oculogenital manifestations of urethritis. In the next 10 years he wrote a host of papers on non-gonococcal urethritis and its complications, which culminated in 1959 in the text *Traitement des suppurations uréthro-génitales et de leurs complications chez l'homme et chez la femme* written with Pierre Durel.

Meanwhile the quintessential Frenchman was developing. He had learnt English before the second world war, was very much an Anglophil, and relished his visits to watch rugby at Twickenham with Drs Harkness, Willcox, and Dickson Wright. He had become a member of the Medical Society for

the Study of Venereal Diseases and was made an honorary life member in 1987. He was a keen sportsman and good at tennis and hunting. He took part in several car rallies, including the Monte Carlo and Paris to Dakar races, and had learned to fly.

Metronidazole (Flagyl) was introduced at the end of the 1950s, and Durel and Siboulet read a paper on it at the IUVDT meeting in London in October 1959. In 1962 with V Roiron and Pierre Durel, he wrote a monograph, *La trichomonase*. Almost 30 years later it is easy to forget how many papers Siboulet produced at that time. In his work he was very much influenced by the approach of Dick Willcox, and his charm increased his circle of friends not the least being Duncan Catterall.

In his mature years he became very interested in medical education. In 1974 he wrote a standard textbook, *Maladies sexuellement transmissibles*, with his colleagues at the Institut Alfred Fournier, which was translated into Spanish and Italian. He was a roving ambassador for the French school of venereology, which was based more on clinical experience than science, and was none the worse for that.

He visited all the former French colonies and was feted in the Ivory Coast and Senegal. He had a great feeling for the importance of latin culture and formed links with our colleagues in South America. He worked as a consultant for the WHO. He will be remembered with gratitude for the 12 international postgraduate courses conducted in French on sexually transmitted diseases that he organised each year in Paris in collaboration with the WHO, which influenced the specialty in Francophone countries of the Third World.

Like the great syphillographer at the turn of the century, Alfred Fournier, he considered it essential that the public be taught about the dangers of sexually transmitted diseases using all the modern techniques of his time, radio, television, and video. Indeed, I accompanied him on one of his last visits to a television studio in Paris. His last years culminated in his organisation of the Second world congress on sexually transmitted diseases in Paris in 1986 and his being elected to the Presidency of the IUVDT.

He was Gallic charm personified, had an enormous private practice in the fashionable Rue du Faubourg St Honoré, was a holder of the Legion d'Honneur, and was a bon viveur for whom every day was an adventure. He leaves a widow, Mme Monique Siboulet, two children (his son Antoine is also a venereologist), and many close friends.

Michael Waugh